

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY LONDON

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AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L ROME 3164

LIMDIS

USEEC ALSO FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: NATO EEC IT

SUBJ: CONSULTATIONS WITH NATO ALLIES

REF: STATE 038167, LUXEMBOURG 0191

1. THIS EMBASSY WELCOMES AN EXAMINATION OF THE PROCESS AND

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PARAMETERS OF ALLIED CONSULTATION. A MAJOR COUNTRY WHICH IS MORE
FREQUENTLY EXCLUDED FROM AD HOC CONSULTATIONS THAT ARE OTHER
ALLIES OF COMPARABLE SIZE (IF NOT WEIGHT), ITALY IS EXTRAORDINARILY
SENSITIVE TO THIS ISSUE. CERTAINLY, AS SIGNALLED BY EMBASSY
LUXEMBOURG, THE INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK OF THE QUADRIPARTITE
GROUP PRESENTS A PROBLEM TO ALLIED COUNTRIES NOT INCLUDED
IN THEIR DISCUSSION. AT BEST THE QUADRIPARTITE FORMULA IS SEEN

HERE AS AN ALLIED "DIRECTORATE", AT WORST IT IS SEEN AS RELEGATING NON-PARTICIPANTS TO SECOND CLASS STATUS. CLEARLY THE QUADRI-PARTITE ARRANGEMENT HAS DEVELOPED A DYNAMIC OF ITS WON THAT LEADS TO AN ENLARGEMENT OF THE SCOPE AND NUMBER OF ISSUES TI ADDRESSES. INESCAPABLY, HOWEVER, THE QUADRIPARTITE GROUP IS USEFUL AND EFFECTIVE ON MANY ISSUES WHERE A LARGER ALLIED FORUM MIGHT PROVE AN IMPEDIMENT TO CONSENSUS AND ACTION.

2. THE ITALIANS ARE PARTICULARLY OFFENDED BY THEIR EXCLUSION FROM CONSULTATIONS ON QUESTIONS WHERE THEY BELIEVE THEY HAVE CLEAR NATIONAL INTERESTS THAT NEED TO BE AIRED. BUT THERE REMAIN SOME, PERHAPS NATURAL, AMBIVALENCES IN THEIR ATTITUDE TOWARD CONSULTATIONS. IT IS IMPORTANT TO ITALIAN AMOUR PROPRE TO BE INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN VIRTUALLY ALL EXCLUSIVE ALLIED GROUP-INGS. TO SOME EXTENT PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR ITALY'S MEMBERSHIP IN NATO DEPENDS UPON THE VISIBILITY OF ITALY IN ALLIED FORA. AND INCREASINGLY, ANY EVIDENCE OF EXCLUSION FROM ALLIED CONSULTATIVE MECHANISMS IS INTERPRETED AS A LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN ITALY'S DEMOCRATIC CREDENTIALS AND IN THE POSITION OF ITS POWERFUL COMMUNIST PARTY.

3. IN OUR EXPERIENCE, BEYOND ISSUES THAT ITALIANS CONSIDER CLEARLY BEAR ON THEIR NATIONAL INTERESTS (MBFR, SALT, ER/RB, LOS, FOR EXAMPLE) OR INVOLVE AREAS OF TRADITIONAL ITALIAN INTEREST (SUCH AS HORN, NORTH AFRICA, AND MALTA), THEY ARE CONTENT TO BE KEPT INFORMED EITHER BILATERALLY OR IN PLENARY ALLIED MEETINGS. ON SOME CONFIDENTIAL

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ISSUES, ITALIAN AMBIVALENCE TOWARD CONSULTATIONS IS MOST APPARENT. THE ARAB/ISRAELI DISPUTE IS A CASE IN POINT. ITALY DEPENDS OVERWHELMINGLY FOR ITS ENERGY IMPORTS ON THE ARAB STATES- TOA LARGE EXTENT UPON THE MORE RADICAL ARAB STATES. IT HAS THEREFORE A KEEN INTEREST IN THE EVOLUTION OF THE ARAB/ISRAELI DISPUTE AND WANTS TO KEEP INFORMED ON DEVELOPMENTS. HOWEVER, ITALY DOES NOT WHICH TO BECOME IDENTIFIED WITH ANY SMALL ALLIED GROUP LEALING WITH THIS ISSUE AND BE SEEN BY THE ARABS AS SHARING THE RESPONSIBILITY OF LEADERSHIP IN DEVISING POSITIONS INTERPRETED AS INIMICAL TO ARAB INTERESTS. IN THIS ISSUE, TOO, ITALY IS PROBABLY THE LEAST SYMPATHETIC TO ISRAEL OF MOST OF THE IMPORTANT ALLIES AND WOULD PREFER NOT TO BE PUT IN A POSTION WHERE THAT ATTITUDE WAS APPARENT.

4. THE ITALIANS SEEM GENERALLY SATISFIED WITH CONSULTATIONS ON FOREIGN POLICY ISSUES WITHE THE EC-9 FRAMEWORK. THERE, TOO, THEY APPEAR MOST COMFORTABLE IN THE MIDDLE OF A GRAND CONSENSUS. IN THAT CONTEXT THE ITALIANS PREFER TO FOLLOW EC INITIATIVES RATHER THAN FORMULATE THEIR OWN, EXCEPT WHEN THEIR PERCEIVED NATIONAL INTERESTS ARE CLEARLY AND DIRECTLY AT RISK.

5. THE ITALIAN PARADOX OF DIFFIDENCE AND A DESIRE TO BE SEEN AS

MOVERS AND SHAKERS DOES HOWEVER OFFER OCCASIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO THE U.S. IN THE FURTHERANCE OF ITS OWN POLICY INTERESTS IN BOTH

NATO AND THE EEC. ON THOSE ISSUES OF LIMITED DIRECT INTEREST TO ITALY AND OF MAJOR IMPORTANCE OF THE U.S., TIMELY BRIEFINGS - AND INCLUDING ITALY IN RESTRICTED CONSULTATIONS- CAN OFTEN RESULT IN ITALIAN SUPPORT FOR AMERICAN POSITIONS WITHIN THE ALLIANCE AND IN THE COMMUNITY.

6. AS WE CONSIDER THE UTILITY OF CONSULTATIONS WE MUST ADMIT THAT ON A WIDE RANGE OF IMPORTANT ISSUES THE ITALIANS ARE OFTEN UNABLE TO CONTRIBUTE MUCH. ONE IMPORTANT REASON FOR THE FREQUENT LACK OF CLEARLY DEFINED ITALIAN POSITIONS IS THE UNEVEN QUALITY AND UNDERSTAFFING OF THE FOREIGN MINISTRY. GENERALLY, MINISTRY WORKING LEVEL
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OFFICIALS DO NOT HAVE THE TIME, THE INTEREST OR THE DEPTH TO DEAL WITH ANY BUT THE MOST PRESSING ISSUES--ISSUES, MOREOVER, BY THE NATURE OF THINGS ITALIAN, THAT HAVE CLEAR DOMESTIC CONSTITUENCIES. A NEW ACTIVIST SECRETARY GENERAL WHO IS DEDICATED TO REFORM AND REORGANIZATION MAY ALTER THE SITUATION, BUT WE DOUBT IT.

7. IT WOULD BE LESS THAN HONEST NOT TO END THESE CONSIDERATIONS WITH THE CENTRAL EMERGING DILEMMA. THE ITALIANS NEED THE KIND OF VISIBLE PARTICIPATION IN THE INNER CIRCLES OF U.S. MULTILATERAL INTERCOURSE AND WE SEE SOME REAL ADVANTAGES IN MEETING THEIR DESIRES WHENEVER POSSIBLE. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE ACCRETION OF COMMUNIST PARTY INFLUENCE IN AND ACCESS TO FOREIGN POLICY DECISION MAKING SUGGESTS THAT THERE MAY BE THE NEED AT SOME POINT TO REEXAMINE OUR ENTIRE CONSULTATION POLICY AS IT AFFECTS ITALY.

8. FINALLY, MEMBERSHIP IN THE "INNER CIRCLE" HAS TO BE A "TWO WAY STREET". WE SEE NO HARM IN OCCASIONALLY REMINDING THE ITALIANS THAT TO BE TREATED AS A MAJOR ALLY, ITALY HAS TO ACT LIKE ONE AND ACCEPT THE RESPONSIBILITIES THAT GO WITH IT. GARDNER

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